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March 20, 1953

Need for construction of boundary fence and observation towers in vicinity of Brownsville, Texas-Matamoros, Mexico to control illegal traffic.

The illegal traffic across the practically dry Rio Grande River bed within the area encompassed by the city limits of Brownsville, Texas and the neighboring city of Matamoros, Tamps., Mexico has reached such proportions that the construction of a boundary fence seems to be not only necessary and justified but also almost imperative. I know of no other way to cope with the situation. It is already completely beyond the ability of the presently authorized strength of the Brownsville Border Patrol unit to control, and grows worse steadily.

The seriousness of this situation lies not only in the fact that such large numbers of aliens are violating our Immigration laws to the point of making a farce of them, but that this disgraceful situation has become a public spectacle with thousands of out of state visitors from all over the nation witnessing and photographing these brazen mass violations of our laws in open daylight.

In a manner of speaking, that which exists here is an uncontrolled free zone, that is, as far as Immigration laws are concerned, with the aliens crossing the dry river practically unimpeded and then finding it relatively easy to proceed on out of the city of Brownsville by foot, bus, train, taxi, trucks, etc. Practically speaking, with the two cities lining the opposite river banks and only a narrow dry river bed separating them, our position is as hopeless as attempting to keep thousands of people from crossing any given street here or in any given city.

If these mass illegal crossings are allowed to continue and grow steadily worse the Immigration Service might conceivably be placed in a position of justifying its existence in Brownsville. In these days of high taxes and so much publicity alleging excessive government employees and cost of government the question might well be raised as to why the taxpayers should be called upon to maintain large staffs of government employees at two bridges in Brownsville for the purpose of inspecting persons entering the U. S. when apparently all who wished to do so entered by crossing the river between the two bridges without inspection. It does indeed present a rather paradoxical situation, as at times there seems to be more people crossing the river than are crossing the bridges.

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From Noon to 2:00 PM, February 14, 1953, I tried to keep a count of of the number of people who crossed and my count was 273 for this two hour period. I left the levee at 2:00 PM and returned at 2:30 PM dressed in different clothes. From 2:30 PM until 5:00 PM I was able to keep a fairly accurate count of the crossings, and counted 403 for this 2½ hour period, making a total of 676. The figure of 676 represents only the number who crossed between the two bridges during the 4½ hours that I watched and counted them. I have no idea of the total number who may have crossed within the 24 hour period extending throughout that night and in the following morning until noon, and throughout the entire city limit crossing area.

With the huge numbers of agrarian workers of Mexico have come many hundreds of the undesirable and criminal elements of Mexico. Matamoros is loaded with professional burglars, thieves, pickpockets, prostitutes, narcotics peddlers, beggars, bums, shoe shine boys and child thieves from all over Mexico.

The crime situation in the city of Brownsville and surrounding area is serious, and grows worse steadily as the criminal element of Mexico infiltrates into Matamoros to take advantage of a well nigh perfect set-up for them. The 1952 report of the Brownsville City Police Department showed a heavy increase in the number of burglaries in 1952 over 1951. There were 680 actual reported burglaries, thefts, and robberies in the city of Brownsville during 1952, which is as high as 2000 per cent over the comparable crime record for other cities in the U. S. There were 655 arrests for drunkenness in the city of Brownsville during 1952, so it might be said that burglary is more common than drunkenness in Brownsville. This is not at all to criticize or deride the beleaguered and harassed Brownsville Police Department, as the Brownsville Police Force is a good police force.

Practically all of these crimes are committed during daylight hours when little or no attention is attracted to them by knocking on the doors since they appear to be working around the house. Clothes line stripping has increased to the point where housewives cannot leave the premises while clothes are on the line, and quite often the clothes are stripped from the lines while the housewife is in the house and her attention diverted elsewhere for a few minutes.

Prostitution is becoming a problem in the dance halls, beer parlors, and cheap hotels of Brownsville due to the influx of alien prostitutes from the legalized red light district of Matamoros. There are several hundred prostitutes in the Matamoros district and they find it relatively easy to cross the river to Brownsville and quickly recross to Mexico on any tip or sign of impending raids by the Border Patrol or local officers. If apprehended, they of course deny being prostitutes, and give a fictitious name and claim it is their first illegal entry.

Among all the illegal crossers of course there are the smugglers and peddlers of narcotics, chiefly marijuana in this area. Already the local police have found two small shine boys carrying marijuana in their shine boxes. They stated that they were told to cross the river and hang around the Missouri Pacific depot close to the river and someone would contact them there.

Quite aside and apart from these considerable numbers of illegal crossers of the criminal, immoral and undesirable classes are the tremendous numbers of illegal crossers belonging to the farm and general labor classes. We know from asking each apprehended alien where he entered the U. S. that from 85 to 90% of all the illegal entrant aliens in the lower part of the Rio Grande Valley crossed within the immediate vicinity of Brownsville.

Although the construction of this proposed fence would not stop the illegal crossing of these large numbers of farm laborers, no one intends to contend that this fence is a cure-all in that direction. It will force their crossings out beyond the ends of the fence into the open fields and country where we and other officers will have a much better chance of apprehending them before they reach any pre-arranged destination. The cessation of the crossings of such large numbers of the farm labor class of aliens within the city limit area of Brownsville and their constant streaming through the streets of the city will remove the shield of numbers under which many of the criminal, immoral, and undesirable elements of these aliens conduct their nefarious operations.

I would now like to present another very good and important reason why I think a restraining fence between Matamoros and Brownsville is very essential and vitally needed. We have here in Brownsville, in common more or less with the entire Rio Grande Valley I think, a small but very loud and vocal minority and with some degree of some kind of influence in some quarters it seems, who are continually on the alert for some kind of incident, however slight, which may be built^{up} into the basis of a complaint against the Border Patrol.

On Monday, March 2, 1953, I assigned four Patrolmen to work in civilian clothes between the Gateway Bridge and the B & M Bridge to apprehend illegal crossers in this area. Patrolman Joseph W. Hunt observed four small children, two boys and two girls, crossing the river and approached them on the U. S. side to direct them to the Border Patrol vehicle, which was parked across the road. The children, as is quite often the case, broke to run and Patrolman Hunt was able to hold but two of them, the other two running back across the river. The two children Hunt was holding began to shriek and struggled to wrench loose from him, and, as Hunt said later, he felt embarrassed holding the two struggling and shrieking children but did not know exactly what to do with them. At this point a car stopped alongside and two men, later identified as Mr. J. T. Monk and Mr. L. L. Hinojosa, operators of the Commercial Credit Company of Brownsville, attempted to come to the assistance of the alien children and demanded that Hunt release the children.

They charged that Hunt was cruelly hurting the children and that this was an example of police brutality, that Hunt should have released the children when they indicated that they did not wish to be held, and that they would report the matter to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which they did. They went to the office of Mr. Clay Zachry, Jr., Special Agent of the FBI in Brownsville, and made these allegations and then they appeared at this office to press their complaint. Mr. Monk made the statement that "This is just the incident that we have been waiting for. This is the incident that is going to blast the Immigration Service right out of existence."

The alien children were here at our detention room by then and we requested Mr. Zachry to come and interview and examine the children, which he did. Mr. Monk made crude attempts to ask the children leading questions, such as "He pulled your arm and hurt you, didn't he?" The children were unconcerned and diffident about the whole matter and offered no cooperation to Mr. Monk and Mr. Hinojosa in their efforts to blast the Immigration Service out of existence, so Mr. Monk and Mr. Hinojosa left. Mr. Zachry stated there was no basis for any such complaint and he placed the results of his investigation in his 'zero' file.

Many of the alien women use this professional method also, and I personally have apprehended several alien women crossing the river to Brownsville who attempted to draw attention to themselves by these actions and failing that kicked and barked up my shins in good style. With the large numbers of these types of professional illegal crossers in Matamoros and the citizens of the ilk of Mr. Monk and Mr. Hinojosa in Brownsville such incidents are bound to occur and they place the Patrolmen under too much pressure.

R | I am confident that the construction of a well designed fence along the U.S. side of the river between the points designated on the aerial photo map and the IBWC map, together with the necessary equipment and personnel to adequately patrol and safeguard the fence, will prove very effective in alleviating the untenable situation now existing. It will in effect automatically eliminate entire classes of the present illegal crossers, such as the small shoe shine boys and other juvenile urchins, women, family groups with women and small children, the citizen housewives and other citizens who now walk across the river to save the bridge fare and liquor tax or because they do not have a nickel bridge fare, and many others who at present engage in traffic back and forth across the river merely because it is so easy and they have become accustomed to doing so.

The fence may or may not materially reduce the large numbers of illegal farm labor crossers, but the very important thing is that it will force them outside of the city of Brownsville, where they may not obtain so much aid and assistance and easy access to transportation. I am also confi-

dent, as are all the other law enforcement officers of this area, that the construction of this fence and adequate patrolling of it will prove highly effective in combatting the very serious crime situation now existing in the city of Brownsville and the surrounding area.

It is my understanding that when the construction of such fences along the Rio Grande River has been proposed in the past that two of the main objections raised to them was the matter of the river flooding and washing out sections of the fence, or the river changing its course in sections, and the difficulty of providing accessibility to the farm and ranch land lying between the fence and the river. These objections may be disposed of for this short section of fence in this locality. There will be no land under cultivation or in use between this proposed fence and the river, and the river flow in this area has stabilized at such a low volume of water that any possibility of damage to the fence from high water is extremely remote.

The terrain along the entire route of the proposed fence is particularly well adapted for such purposes from the construction standpoint, presenting a minimum of engineering expense and difficulties for such a project. The land is flat and level, practically at sealevel, with no great amount of brush of any size to be cleared, and only a minimum of leveling and filling of earth involved. Several times during the preparation of this report I had occasion to confer with Mr. Arthur J. Moore, Project Engineer in Charge of the Valley section of the International Boundary and Water Commission, with offices in Harlingen, Texas. He stated that the construction of this fence was relatively simple as an engineering feat. In response to my query if the IBWC had the machinery, equipment, and personnel to do the surveying, brush clearing, levelling, and preparation of any selected fence line he replied in the affirmative, and also to do the entire project if they received the instructions to do so.

A great deal of time has been spent in trying to determine just how much fence, that is, what length of fence would be required to be effective, to strike the balance between too little and more than was really necessary to accomplish the desired objectives. In addition to our combined personal knowledges of the crossing habits of the aliens in this area, aerial photo maps were studied, I looked at the area from the air and walked out the river and studied the terrain to select the proposed ends of the fence. My opinion and that of all others consulted is that any fence will not be really effective and worthwhile unless it extends beyond the city limits of both Matamoros and Brownsville and ends in the lower bends of the river in open lands and fields, and far enough outside of town to cause the aliens to walk a distance of several miles to flank the fence and come into town.

Starting from the upper end of the fence at point 5 in the lower portion of the Rusteberg bend to the lower end of the fence in the Wilbur H. Wright bend will require an even ten miles of fence. The aerial photo map is very accurate to the scale of one inch per 1000 feet. Portions of this fence route were measured by automobile speedometer where there was a passable road immediately adjacent to the river, other portions were walked out and paced off, and some portions were measured by tape. Also the accurately scaled aerial map was measured by a scaled measuring wheel and any way it

is measured it comes to an even ten miles, considering that the exact point in the lower end of the Wright bend where the ten miles of fence would terminate is not critical. Then miles of fence would terminate within a 200 or 300 yard section of the lower end of the bend.

I do not believe that the recommended ten miles of fence can be reduced much if any without greatly reducing the effectiveness of the fence in inverse proportion to the amount of reduction of fence. Certainly no reduction should be made on the proposed upper end in the Rusteberg bend at point 5. Any reduction must be made on the lower end to minimize loss of effectiveness, as the larger number of illegal crossings are made in the upstream direction from Matamoros by those aliens who have intention of travelling up the Valley to the San Benito-Harlingen area and points on up-Valley.

My idea is that the fence should be constructed at a distance of approximately 100 feet from the river. This is just an arbitrary figure, as in some places such as in the vicinities of the two bridges and in the entire space between the two bridges it will not be possible to construct the fence that far from the river, and in many sections it will be feasible to construct it farther from the river. With all brush removed between the fence and the river, and for a reasonable space on the other side of the fence, and with an all weather lane for patrolling on each side of the fence, I feel very confident that we can adequately protect and patrol the fence. The lanes for the patrol cars need be but one-way lanes with turning areas available for turning and backtracking during wet weather, and unsurfaced caliche lanes would be satisfactory. Some kind of a hard surfaced lane would of course be much better as the white dust arising from the caliche would tend to give away the location of any patrol car.

My plan for patrolling and protecting the fence is to have two radio equipped cars patrolling the fence during daylight hours, one car inside the fence, and one car outside the fence. Such a patrol car during an eight shift would patrol 240 miles at an average of 30 miles an hour. I doubt if the average would be that great but say each car patrolled 200 miles during an eight hour shift. The total for the two cars would be 400 miles or 20 complete round trips of the fence. A car would then have passed any point of the fence 40 times during the eight hours, or an average of five times each hour, or an average of passing any point of the fence each 12 minutes. The protection for the fence would actually be much better than these figures indicate, as the two patrol cars would not patrol steadily from one end of the fence to the other on a schedule, but would continually reverse and backtrack, one on each side of the fence and separated from each other but in constant radio communication with each other. As the two patrol cars will be but a few miles and a few minutes from each other at any time, and in radio contact, I see no reason why more than one Patrolman for each car should be required for hours of daylight duty.

For protecting and patrolling the fence at night my plan is to have a three man team consisting of a radio patrol car with driver and a two man foot patrol team equipped with walkie-talkie radio, with the driver

dropping off the two man team to patrol the fence on foot for a time, and picking them up and speeding them to another section of the fence and dropping them off again.

I am sure that all who read this report realize that if any such fence is constructed the necessary manpower to adequately protect and patrol the fence must be supplied also. The two go together. If the required increase of personnel for this purpose cannot be furnished I feel it would be much better to have no fence, as without personnel to protect the fence these malicious aliens would cut the fence to pieces in a short time.

The presently authorized complement of 14 men for the Brownsville Border Patrol unit is all too pitifully inadequate to be forced to divert any of them from the apprehensions of illegal entrant aliens to a purely preventive duty of patrolling any such fence. I do not anticipate any appreciable volume of attempts to breach the fence, inasmuch as there will be but ten miles of it, and the largest category of illegal entrant aliens, the farm laborers, will in my opinion merely cross beyond the ends of the fence, and some of the other classes such as the small urchins, women and children, etc., will be incapable of breaching the fence anyway. We may have some trouble from the criminal elements, I anticipate some from them but I do not anticipate any great volume of attempts to breach the fence as long as it is well and adequately patrolled.

Signed: David Snow
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Note: This is a condensed report taken from a 29-page report submitted by Patrol Inspector in Charge Snow.